

University of Montana ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches

Mike Mansfield Papers

5-23-1969

The Generation Gap and the Campus

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "The Generation Gap and the Campus" (1969). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 763.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/763

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

THE GENERATION GAP AND THE CAMPUS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, with respect to the relationship between the generations, there has been increasing concern expressed in various segments of our society. There have been serious difficulties among young people, to be sure, but there has also been a good deal of fanaticism in reaction. In this situation, there is no justification for pomposity on the part of the older generation any more than there is for anarchism on the part of the younger generation.

That there is a gap between the old and young is an inescapable biological reality. Nothing can be done about that except to accept it. That there is a lack of credibility or of mutual tolerance of ideas between the generations is also a fact. That difference, too, has a certain inevitability; down through the generations, it has been more the norm than the abnorm between old and young.

We need only go back, in all honesty, to our own younger days to sense the similarity between past and present. There were strains and tugs then as there are now. The principal difference is that we who are older, now, were younger then and were doing most of the straining and tugging.

The older generation has its faults which, in my judgment, tend to center on a shirking of responsibilities toward the young who, in their own way, for better or for worse, are striving to grapple with a world which they did not make. The faults of the younger generation, in turn seem to me to center on a tendency to reject whatever has gone before as, at best, irrelevant. On the part of the mini-minorities, moreover, there is an apparent determination not merely to reject the past but to rampage over past, present, and future and reduce them all to a rubble heap.

What is needed is a realistic appraisal of the situation. The present generation of youngsters was born into a world which they did not make and which we elders helped to make. These kids are not to be dismissed as some sort of monsters from another planet. They are, after all, our progeny. If we start from that point, perhaps we can bridge the gaps between the generations with a degree of honesty and humility, even if we cannot close them.

I would also have the temerity to suggest to young people that they resist the temptation to blame everything on the previous generation. Those of us who are older should, in turn, act our age and stop the flatulent berating of youngsters when we ourselves are not without blame. Young people have to make their own lives. They have to find a way to face the responsibilities which go with life. They have to make and correct their own mistakes along with the accumulated mistakes of the past and, in that way, to come forward, as we tried in our turn to do, with a responsible and reasonable way of life of their own.

With particular reference to the pres-

ent unrest on a small minority of the Nation's college campuses, it is my belief that the following criteria should be used:

First. The Federal Government should, if at all possible, not become involved in the settlement of campus disputes.

Second. As far as peaceful demonstrations, dissent, and petitions are concerned, they are entirely lawful and guaranteed to all our citizens under the Constitution; as far as violence and license are concerned, they are contrary to the law of the land and, therefore, are punishable. The law must be upheld and the punishment made to fit the crime and this punishment should be applicable to all our citizens on or off the campus.

Third. The universities of the country have rules and regulations, the enforcement of which is their responsibility. They also have penalties such as suspension and expulsion to use should these rules and regulations not be adhered to.

Fourth. The administrators of the universities and colleges as well as the students and the faculty are, in effect, in the process of passing through permanent institutions. The institutions and the maintenance of their effectiveness ought to take precedence over the predilections of any transient or group of transients.

Fifth. Congress passed an amendment to the Higher Education Act in 1968 which gives authority and responsibility to administrative officials of the universities and which was designed to assist in restraining violence and license.

To the best of my knowledge, no administrator in any college which has been subject to violence and license by students has seen fit to put this amendment into operation even though the authority to do so rests with them.

It is my further understanding that the reason that this has not been done is that the administrative authorities of the colleges have indicated that they do not believe this amendment is constitutional. I can only say that if that is the principal basis for their reticence, they should take the matter to the courts and get a ruling as to whether or not it is constitutional.

Sixth. On the other side of the coin, the responsibility for listening to and heeding legitimate grievances and maintaining law and order is the prime responsibility of the colleges themselves and this includes not only the administrators but the faculties and the student bodies as well.

Insofar as all generations are concerned, we should face up to the difficulties which confront us today. Our most profound obligation—young and old—is to keep this society, this Nation, and this world livable not only for ourselves but for those many generations which will come after us.